



17.30, left Chiaroscuro and Expressionist setting in Sjöberg's *The Heavenly Play*.



17.31, right *Torment*: Sinister, endless flights of stairs in the school are similar to those found in the city streets.



17.32, left Caligula as Nosferatu, in *Torment* (compare with 5.16).



17.33, right Two time periods in one shot: Julie, sitting in the foreground, tells of an episode from her childhood; in the background her mother talks with her as a child.

pressionism. Looming architecture and long, sharp shadows turn the entire city into a prison (17.31). The pudgy Caligula, with his round spectacles and fussy manner, becomes a wartime Caligari, and his shadow threatens the lovers in a gesture that echoes Murnau's vampire in *Nosferatu* (17.32).

After the war, Sjöberg continued to move between theater and cinema. After staging Strindberg's 1888 naturalist play *Miss Julie*, he adapted it to the screen in 1951. The film concentrates upon the performances, especially Anita Björk's skittery Julie, but it also expands the original *Kammerspiel*. In Strindberg's play, characters recount their memories in monologues. Sjöberg dramatizes the scenes as flashbacks that combine past and present in the same shot (17.33). Conventions of what would become art cinema can be found in Strindberg's original *Kammerspiel*, but Sjöberg adds a modernist ambiguity derived from film's power over space and time.

ENGLAND: QUALITY AND COMEDY

British film output declined during the war, when filmmaking personnel were conscripted and studio facilities were turned to military use. Yet high wartime attendance boosted the industry. The main companies—the Rank Organization, headed by J. Arthur Rank, and the Associated British Picture Corporation—expanded their domains. Associated British owned a major theater chain, while Rank

controlled two others and owned the largest distribution firm, several studios, and two producing companies.

Problems in the Industry

In 1944, a report entitled “Tendencies to Monopoly in the Cinematograph Film Industry” had recommended that the major companies' power be reduced. The “Palache report,” as it came to be known, remained the center of debate for years, but it was not acted on soon, partly because the industry seemed robust. High attendance continued, with that of 1946 the highest ever. More British films were being made, and many were of high enough quality to be popular at home and competitive abroad. Moreover, because Rank needed many films for his theater chains, he supported several small independent producers. Rank also had ties with some of the American Majors, and English films began to enter the United States regularly, often becoming successful there. For a few years it seemed as though the intense competition between the British and American firms might diminish.

Yet trouble soon appeared. Production costs were rising, few films made profits, and Hollywood films commanded 80 percent of screen time. The left-wing Labour government, committed to fighting monopolies and protecting British industry from American competition, tackled these problems.

In 1947, the government imposed a 75-percent tariff on all imported American films. When the U.S. in-

dustry immediately threatened a boycott, the government compromised and, in 1948, established a quota reminiscent of the prewar era: 45 percent of all screenings in Britain had to consist of British films. Many exhibitors and distributors, dependent on American films, opposed the quota, and it was soon reduced again, to 30 percent.

The Rank Organization was vertically integrated, and only a few firms controlled the industry, so the government could have forced companies to sell part of their holdings, as the American government did in the Paramount decision of 1948 (pp. 327–328). Those trying to cure the industry's woes, however, realized that "divorcement" decrees would be suicidal in Great Britain. If firms were forced to sell their theaters, American companies would simply buy them.

The government attempted another solution in 1949. The National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) was founded for the purpose of loaning money to independent producers. Unfortunately, £3 million, over half the total amount loaned out, went to one of the largest independents, British Lion, which producer Alexander Korda had acquired in 1946. British Lion soon went bankrupt, and its heavy losses weakened the NFFC's ability to support other firms.

In 1950, after a year of financial crisis, the government tried once more to bolster production. It reduced the entertainment tax charged on theater tickets but added a levy against ticket sales, part of which was given to producers. The "Eady levy," named after its planner, thus provided a production subsidy comparable to those that appeared at about the same time in Sweden, France, and Italy.

The Eady levy worked reasonably well and remained in force for several decades. Nevertheless, the film industry continued to decline during the 1950s, as competition with television increased. The problem of monopoly in the industry intensified. Rank and the Associated British Picture Corporation bought up some theaters, and other small, independent exhibitors were forced out of business by declining attendance. Despite industry problems, however, the decade after the war saw a number of important films and trends.

Literary Heritage and Eccentricity

British producers continued to debate whether to produce high-budget prestige films for export or more modest films aimed at home audiences. As always, many films were literary adaptations featuring famous actors. Laurence Olivier followed up his wartime success *Henry V*



17.34 *Oliver Twist*: an elaborate set re-creates Victorian London.

(1945) by directing and starring in *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1955). Gabriel Pascal continued his association with the plays of George Bernard Shaw by making a lavish version of *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1946), with Vivien Leigh and Claude Rains. This approach to filmmaking was comparable to the French Tradition of Quality. In addition, two major British directors achieved international reputations during this period.

David Lean had his start during the war codirecting *In Which We Serve* (1942) with Noel Coward. His postwar career began with the release of *Brief Encounter* (1945), a story of a middle-aged man and woman, both trapped in unexciting marriages, who fall in love. They meet repeatedly but resist having a sexual affair. Lean's restrained romanticism centers around Celia Johnson's portrayal of the heroine.

Lean went on to make two popular adaptations of Dickens novels, *Great Expectations* (1946) and *Oliver Twist* (1948). Both featured Alec Guinness, who within a few years became the most popular actor in exported British films. *Oliver Twist* is typical of Lean's postwar films, containing large, dark sets, deep-focus compositions, and film-noir lighting (17.34). Lean also made comedies, such as *Hobson's Choice* (1953), in which a strong-willed heroine defeats her tyrannical father. Lean later gained wider renown with costume epics such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Doctor Zhivago* (1965).

The other prominent director of the postwar years was Carol Reed. Reed had begun directing in the late 1930s, but his international reputation was built upon *Odd Man Out* (1947), *The Fallen Idol* (1948), *The Third Man* (1949), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1951), and *The Man Between* (1953). Like Lean, Reed favored



17.35 Location shooting in *Odd Man Out*.



17.36 The wounded hero stares down at the table . . .



17.37 . . . and we see his point of view of a pool of beer, with various characters from earlier scenes of the film superimposed in the bubbles.

dramatic lighting, often intensified by flashy camera techniques. Thus *The Third Man* (probably influenced by Orson Welles, who plays the villain) is full of canted framings and uses an unusual instrument, the zither, for its musical accompaniment.

Reed's awareness of emerging art-cinema norms is evident in one of his most important films, *Odd Man Out*. An Irish Republican Army unit steals payroll money to fund its terrorist activities. During the robbery, the hero (James Mason) is wounded. As he flees, he encounters a series of people who try to save him or to exploit him. While Reed shot some scenes in Irish slums (17.35), several passages stress a more subjective realism (17.36, 17.37).

Less famous than Lean and Reed, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger were undoubtedly the most unusual British filmmakers of the era. They had created their production company, The Archers, in 1943, and supported it with Rank's help. Writing, producing, and directing in collaboration, the pair made modest dramas in black and white and elaborate Technicolor productions.

Typical of their offbeat approach is *I Know Where I'm Going!* (1945). A strong-willed young woman engaged to a rich industrialist attempts to join him on a Scottish island. As she waits for the weather to clear, she struggles against falling in love with a pleasant, but impoverished, Scottish landowner. Powell and Pressburger display their characteristic feeling for the British countryside, as well as their sympathy for eccentric characters. They even make the headstrong, greedy heroine sympathetic. Another intimate drama, *A Small Back Room* (1948), deals with the intriguing subject of an alcoholic whose job is to defuse unexploded bombs left in England after the war.

Powell and Pressburger directed some of the most opulent color films ever made. Their most popular film,

The Red Shoes (1948), and its successor, *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951), use ballet to motivate deliriously stylized decors and cinematography. *A Matter of Life and Death* (aka *Stairway to Heaven*, 1946) centers on a British pilot who impossibly survives a potentially fatal crash and argues in a heavenly courtroom (in his dream?) that he should be sent back to earth to join the woman he loves. Color film stock used for the sequences on earth contrasts with black-and-white film used for heaven.

One of Powell and Pressburger's color masterpieces is *Black Narcissus* (1947), a story of nuns trying to run a dispensary and school in a Tibetan palace formerly used as a harem. Sexual frustrations, a lack of understanding of local customs, and the general ambience of the setting drive some of the nuns to dereliction of duty, nostalgic fantasies, madness, and even attempted murder before the convent is finally abandoned. The directors created a vivid sense of the Himalayas, even though they shot the film wholly in the studio (Color Plate 17.2).

Powell and Pressburger's most extravagant works contrast strongly with the modest product of Michael Balcon's Ealing Studios. Balcon, a veteran of the industry since the early 1920s, became head of Ealing in 1938. In the postwar period Ealing prospered because the Rank Organization helped finance production and released the studio's films through its distribution network. Balcon achieved a consistency of tone across the studio by making decisions democratically (allowing the studio staff to vote at roundtable meetings) and by giving filmmakers an unusual degree of independence.

Today, Ealing Studios is usually associated with comedies starring Alec Guinness, Stanley Holloway, and other major British actors, but only about one-third of the company's output was in this genre. Indeed, one of the most successful Ealing films is a realistic drama about police life, *The Blue Lamp* (1950). Scenes in



17.38 The Ealing Studios, nestled in a suburban neighborhood, had no backlot on which to build sets. Directors filmed scenes on location, as in *The Blue Lamp*.



17.39 A landscape of bombed-out London in *The Lavender Hill Mob*.

which a veteran cop explains the job to a new recruit give a systematic account of police procedure, in the tradition of the 1930s and wartime British documentaries. As in other Ealing films, many scenes were shot on location in poor or bombed-out areas of London (17.38).

Ealing's reputation for comedies was established with three 1949 releases, *Passport to Pimlico* (directed by Henry Cornelius), *Whiskey Galore!* (aka *Tight Little Island*, directed by Alexander Mackendrick), and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (directed by Robert Hamer). *Kind Hearts*, in which Guinness plays eight different characters, swept him to international stardom. While many Hollywood-style comedies depended on slapstick or on sophisticated screwball situations, Ealing's humor was built on injecting a single fantastic premise into an ordinary situation. *Passport to Pimlico*, for example, takes place in the drab working-class London district of Pimlico, and much of the film was shot on location in realistic style. Yet the plot depends on a zany premise: researchers discover that the suburb is actually not part of England at all but belongs to the French district of Burgundy. As a result, following a maddeningly linear logic, Britishers must have a passport to enter Pimlico, and the residents are no longer subject to London's rationing restrictions. Like other Ealing comedies, *Passport to Pimlico* presents an imaginary escape from postwar austerity.

Another typical Ealing comedy is Charles Crichton's *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951). The hero, played by Guinness, works guarding gold shipped to London banks. With a gang of mild-mannered crooks, he plans and executes a massive heist. The Ealing fantasy emerges when the gang disguises the bullion as souvenir



17.40 When the Lavender Hill Mob plot their crime, the low-key lighting and deep-focus composition suggest Hollywood gangster films of the 1940s (compare with 15.18–15.20).

Eiffel Towers. The film mixes realism with stylization. The near-documentary opening sequence depicts the hero's daily routine. Scenes shot on location (17.39) contrast with scenes that parody film noir and even Ealing's own *Blue Lamp* (17.40). Crichton returned to prominence decades later with *A Fish Called Wanda* (1989), which many critics considered an updating of the Ealing tradition.

The Ealing comedies depend on a notion of English eccentricity: in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, the hero entertains a sweet elderly woman by reading lurid crime thrillers to her. The last major film from the studio, *The Ladykillers* (1955), revolves around a dotty old lady

who discovers that the string quintet players renting her spare room are actually a gang of robbers.

Art-House Success Abroad

Distinctive though the Ealing and Archers films were, they fall into recognizable commercial genres and employ classical storytelling techniques. Yet the success of these films abroad depended largely on the same art theaters that showed Italian Neorealist or Scandinavian films. Although the films were not themselves modernist, they reinforced the trend toward international film circulation that fostered art-cinema trends elsewhere. In particular, they showed that the U.S. market could support European filmmaking to an unprecedented extent.

The pattern was set quietly by *I Know Where I'm Going!*, which became an unexpected hit in a New York art house. Soon afterward Olivier's *Henry V* (U.S. release 1946) ran for thirty-four weeks in a small Manhattan theater at high admission prices. In 1948, his *Hamlet* became such a hit in small theaters that it

moved into wide release and won several Oscars. *Brief Encounter*, *Blithe Spirit*, and other British films prospered in the art-house circuit, with *The Red Shoes*, astonishingly, becoming the top U.S. box-office attraction of 1948. An Ealing comedy could make more money in art houses than in limited release to larger theaters.

In the mid-1950s, most of the older creative figures of the early postwar era lost momentum. Powell and Pressburger broke up *The Archers* in 1956; Powell's career was nearly curtailed by the scandal aroused by *Peeping Tom* (1960). (Although it was a thoughtful examination of a serial killer's psyche, *Peeping Tom* was denounced as lurid trash by British critics; feminists protested its revival in the early 1970s.) Heavy losses forced Balcon to sell Ealing's studio facilities in 1955, though he made a few more films before losing the company. Some of the most successful directors of this era, such as Lean and Reed, went on to make big-budget, American-financed projects. These developments cleared the way for a generation of filmmakers who would turn against the polished cinema of the postwar decade.

Notes and Queries

POSTWAR FRENCH FILM THEORY

Postwar Paris saw a revival of theoretical writings about film as art. Some writers suggested that film aesthetics owed less to the theater than to the novel. In her book *The Age of the American Novel*, trans. Eleanor Hochman (New York: Ungar, 1972; originally published 1948), Claude-Edmonde Magny argued that the work of Hemingway and Faulkner showed strong affinities with the style of American cinema. She also suggested that the camera lens was like the organizing consciousness of the narrator in literary works. Alexandre Astruc spoke of the "camera-pen," *la caméra-stylo*, and predicted that filmmakers would treat their works as vehicles of self-expression much as writers did (Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo*," in Peter Graham, ed., *The New Wave* [New York: Doubleday, 1968], pp. 17–24).

André Bazin also pointed out that a "novelistic" cinema seemed to be emerging in France and Italy. In his opinion, films by Bresson, Clément, Leenhardt, and other directors went beyond the theater's depiction of character behavior. These directors either plunged into the depths of psychology or moved beyond the individual to portray, in a realistic fashion, the world in which the characters lived. Many of Bazin's essays are collected in Hugh Gray, trans. and ed., *What Is Cinema? I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), and *What Is Cinema? II* (Berkeley: Uni-

versity of California Press, 1971); see also Bazin's *Jean Renoir*, trans. W. W. Halsey II and William H. Simon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

The comparison of film to literature also called attention to style and narrative construction. Theorists began to reevaluate the traditional analogy between film style and language by developing a notion of *écriture cinématographique*, or "filmic writing." Bazin revolutionized film criticism by his detailed discussions of how editing, camera-work, and deep-space staging offered expressive possibilities to the filmmaker. He and his peers were also sensitive to how filmic storytelling could create ellipses and could shift point of view. And, by assuming the filmmaker to be a novelist-on-film, the critic could examine even a popular film as the vehicle of a personal vision. There arose debates about whether the filmmaker could be considered an *auteur*, or author, of his works (see Chapter 19).

At the same time, Bazin and others began to ponder the possibility that cinema might be radically unlike all traditional arts. They argued that the film medium has as its basic purpose to record and reveal the concrete world in which we find ourselves. This line of thought treated cinema as a "phenomenological" art, one suited to capture the reality of everyday perception. For thinkers like Bazin (p. 374) and Amédée Ayfre, the Italian Neorealist films exemplify cinema's power to reveal the ties of humans to their surroundings.

Discussions of the theoretical trends of this era can be found in Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), and Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), especially pp. 1–17. A related development, the academic discipline of filmology, emerged at the same period. For a discussion, see Edward Lowry, *The Filmology Movement and Film Study in France* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985).

THE POWELL-PRESSBURGER REVIVAL

For several years, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger remained marginal figures, but their reputations have risen substantially since the late 1970s.

The team made some films that were widely popular, but much of their work was so eccentric that it earned unfavorable reviews. Their baroque melodramas and fantasies lay outside the documentary tradition long considered the strength of British cinema. After the breakup of their production company in 1956 and the scandal surrounding Powell's *Peeping Tom* in 1960, most historians treated them as minor filmmakers. British auteurism tended to focus on Hollywood directors and treat English filmmaking as pallid and stodgy. Raymond Durnat (writing as O. O. Green) presented an intelligent defense in "Michael Powell," *Movie* 14 (autumn 1965): 17–20 (also in his *A Mirror for England* [New York: Praeger, 1971], in revised form). This was, however, largely ignored.

By the mid-1960s, *Peeping Tom* had acquired cult status. The National Film Theatre in London presented a Powell retrospective in 1970, and the National Film Archive and BBC restored a few important films. In 1977, Powell received an award at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado. American director Martin Scorsese helped fund a rerelease of *Peeping Tom*, and the film showed at the 1979 New York Film Festival, with Powell in attendance, to a sell-out crowd. See John Russell Taylor, "Michael Powell: Myths and Supermen," *Sight and Sound* 47, no. 4 (autumn 1978): 226–29; and David Thomson, "Mark of the Red Death," *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 4 (autumn 1980): 258–62. British historian Ian Christie has helped both in the restoration of Powell and Pressburger's films and in the dissemination of information on the pair. See his *Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger* (London: Waterstone, 1985). See also Christie's "Powell and Pressburger: Putting Back the Pieces," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 611 (December 1984): back cover, for an account of how their films have been cut and, in some cases, restored. See also Scott Salwolke, *The Films of Michael Powell and the Archers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1997) and James Howard, *Michael Powell* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1996).

Powell and Pressburger have influenced Martin Scorsese, Francis Coppola, Brian De Palma, George Lucas, and Derek Jarman. *Scorsese on Scorsese*, ed. David Thompson and Ian Christie (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990) contains numerous references to Powell. Powell tells his own story in *Michael Powell: A Life in Movies* (London: Heinemann, 1986) and *Million Dollar Movie* (New York: Random House, 1994).

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